

Revelation Introduction

Written without an amanuensis (uh-man—wen-sis) Revelation is one of the most difficult books of the Bible ... it is silly that “beginners and those who think they know it all” begin with Revelation when in fact you must have a great command of the Old Testament in order to decode the visions, types and symbols.

As an example West says: “John did not simply create images in the Apocalypse from his own thinking or imagination, but drew heavily, as the Spirit moved him to do so, on the language of the Old Testament prophets. Though he did not directly quote even one full Old Testament verse he made allusions about 350 times to Old Testament passages. Some are of course repeated, but still there are references to 250 separate Old Testament passages averaging about 10 per chapter in Revelation. Of the 404 verses in Revelation, 278 contain allusions to the Old Testament Prophets. Since the language of the book is symbolic, and the symbols are drawn from the Old Testament they cannot refer to just anything to which we wish to apply them. They must be used legitimately, in harmony with the original meaning and the prophecies from which they are drawn. That removes atomic Bombs, tanks, helicopters, airplanes and other fantastic ideas of modern readers. (Such the “Future-istic interpretation lean-upon) If the student of Revelation will honestly and carefully read the book, taking time to compare the Old Testament regarding the symbols, he will not likely to stray into the many outrageous theories of today.”

We have a God who speaks. Primitive revelation from God was oral. Sometimes God addressed patriarchs and Moses in direct verbal communication. Sometimes revelation took the form of theophany. The manifestation of God also in symbols, types and visions of representations of God in the early ages.

This gradual course and progressive policy of God's revelation is the meaning of the introduction to the book of Hebrews:

Hebrews 1:1-2 God, who at sundry times (in times past, the old dispensations & in various parts or portions) and in divers manners (employing many methods of communication), spake in time past unto the fathers (from Adam to Malachi) by the prophets, (the agents of ancient revelation) 2. Hath in these last days (the gospel dispensation) spoken unto us by [his] Son (Jesus the Christ), whom he hath appointed heir of all things, (spoken by the prophets). by whom also he made the worlds (By the Logos - the spoken Word of God);

The various parts and portions were gathered into one, the many methods merged into the completed revelation, and the Bible thus becomes the longest thread of thought ever woven in the loom of time

By the time II Peter was written Peter could say

II Peter 1:3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that [pertain] unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Generally in the earliest biblical times dreams were superstitiously regarded. Pretenders of the skill to interpret dreams, were condemned. But there are instances in the Bible where God made use of dreams to reveal His will and His purposes through individuals to whom he imparted the powers of interpretation of dreams. Such as Joseph to his family, to Pharaoh, and Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel had several dreams which angels interpreted. Joel 2:28ff prophesied and Peter on Pentecost quoted and confirmed that God would use sometimes dreams to communicate during the 1st Century age of miracles.

Visions in the periods of direct divine revelations was a means by which God, through persons whom He appointed, revealed Himself

and communicated His will. In this sense these visions were an oracle from God, and in the Old Testament the term had reference to the Most Holy Place of the temple, where God through the high priests revealed and declared His will to the people of Israel. (1 Kings 6:5; 1 Kings 6:19; 1 Kings 6:23; 1 Kings 8:6) In the New Testament the word is used only in the plural ... oracles cf:

Romans 3:1-2 What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? 2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the [a]oracles of God

Hebrews 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

I Peter 4:11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God ...

Oracles in N.T. always refers to the inspired Scriptures which contain the will of God, revealed to men of God who were "moved by the Holy Spirit."

The word trance was of a more limited application. In the New Testament the word occurs three times (Acts 10:10; Acts 11:5; and Acts 22:17.

The meaning of the word denotes a state of mind separated from the body and the external world ... thus being occupied only with mental or spiritual contemplations being seen.

The word prophecy is the far more frequently used word of the Scriptures, and its common use in the religious vernacular of today has been the root of all error. The prophets of the Old Testament were "holy men of God" whom God inspired to preach repentance and reveal the things of the future. Many a false prophet says "the Lord

told me ...this or that ...” when you ask them how? They reply: “He laid it upon my heart.” That is not how God Speaks! God today speaks in His Word the Scriptures.

“The prophets of the New Testament were not of the same category as the Old Testament prophets ... they belonged to the order of the “nine spiritual gifts” of I Corinthians 12:1-31 & 13:1-13 with instructions for the use of these “Spiritual gifts” cf: I Corinthians 14. These Prophets were assistants to the apostles in the development of the scheme of redemption revealed in the New Testament, as mentioned in Ephesians 2:20 and Ephesians 3:1-5. They were more teachers than prognosticators.

I Corinthians 14:3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men [to] edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

The reference to prophesying in the Corinthian epistle designated a form of inspired teaching of the specially endowed teachers. When the New Testament was completed which “that which is perfect” “telos” in Greek a neuter noun which is obviously the scripture. cf:

I Corinthians 13:8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away

“Finally, the term apocalypse is the Greek word that we translate Revelation. It was applied to anything viewed as a prophetic revelation, in the sense of an uncovering or unfolding of a vision. The Book of Revelation is termed a prophecy only in the modified sense of a vision of coming events, but with a limited foretelling of the distant future. The whole vision of the Book of Revelation was surrounded by existing events already in a state of development, and

it was written in code as a warning to the churches living in that period. The early Church was endangered by these conditions and facing the perils of persecution ... of the Jews and Imperial Rome.

The symbolism of the book offers no reason for (most) futuristic belief. Its use of a coded language has an obvious purpose, the same purpose the military has in encoding and communicating messages in code to its personnel in order to withhold the information from the enemy. If John had written Revelation in plain literal language it would have started a premature persecution against the church which would have wiped it off the face of the earth and from the Roman empire.

It was communicated in code for the information and warning of the churches facing this era of persecution. There were spiritually gifted teachers who understood prophecy in every early church able to decode its message to the brethren.

There are visions contained in the Old Testament especially in the apocalyptic parts of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Daniel & Zechariah presented in apocalyptic form about God's people Israel. The exile and the dominion of the Jewish wicked rulers, and the Old Testament people of God, in conflict with the existing heathen powers" ... who ruled the world i.e. Babylon, Media Persia, Greece & Rome.

"The apocalypse of John in Revelation similarly portrays the struggle and triumph of the early Christians. The New Testament church in conflict with the existing Jewish and Roman persecuting powers in the period of their persecutions.

For every phase, metaphor or symbol of the visions of Revelation, there is a parallel in the Old Testament. A preview of Revelation can be found in the New Testament, such as the Mount Olivet discourse of Jesus in Matthew 24:1-51, Mark 13:1-37, and Luke 21:1-38 bearing on

the siege and destruction of Jerusalem”. This was prophesied in Old Testament in Daniel 9:24-27. Proof of this is both Matthew & Mark use a Jewish term “the abomination of desolation” while Luke writing to Gentiles defines the term ... “the abomination of desolation” as:

Luke 21:20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

Any doubters check it out in a parallel Bible: Scripture teaches the “Abomination of Desolation” has already happened it took place in 70 AD when Titus of Rome destroyed Jerusalem, not some future event.

Jesus Olivet discourse helps us understand most of the Book of Revelation. The apocalypse of John is the climax, the consummation and crown of all biblical vision.

Let it be remembered that there is a distinct difference between the prophets and prophecies in the Old Testament and the use of prophecy in the New Testament.

I Corinthians 14:3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men [to] edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

AUTHENTICITY AND CHRONOLOGY

There is hardly a book in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, whose authorship has not been disputed by “the modern higher critics”. This is to raise doubts and create distrust among all who accept the Bible as the Word of God. The seer of Revelation names himself as a John (or I, John). But the critics assert this signature to be made up or pseudonymous. They claim it to be authored by someone other than the actual John or another John.

All early Church sources ascribe Revelation to John the apostle, and this is confirmed by the testimony of the book itself.” The great

Apostle John was the only John in the early Church who did not have to be named beyond “I John” who would be known by everyone.

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John,

Revelation 1:4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:

Revelation 1:9 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 21:2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 22:8 Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

The claim that it was composed by another John compares with the efforts to take Moses out of the Pentateuch. Or the two Isaiah theory, which splits the prophecy, attributing a part of the book to a second Isaiah of a later date after the Babylonian captivity. They confuse the authorship of James, John and Hebrews. All of this is for the purpose of destroying the credibility of the Bible and the inspiration of its author. These issues have been settled by various capable scholars, such as McGarvey of the Lord’s Church, and recognized evangelical denominational theologians and scholars such as Philip Schaff, the translator of the American Standard Version of the Bible, published in 1901. Along with many others of his class who believe in the integrity, authenticity, the credibility, and inspiration of the Scriptures.

There are differences in the language and style of Revelation, and of John's gospel and epistles. Such differences are attributable to the apocalyptic character of Revelation that it is not an epistle of John's composition but was dictated to John by the angel. Therefore, it was the language of the angel and not in his own style. In his own epistles the Holy Spirit utilized John's personality, style and language, but in Revelation it was that of the angel of Christ as plainly stated in chapter 1:1. It must also be considered that John was "in the spirit" when Revelation was dictated to him. He was in prison without a amanuensis (uh-man—wen-sis) secretary or scribe to write in eloquent Greek the dictation of the words of the angel of Christ.

The argument on the chronology of the apocalypse is centered on the choice between two dates that have been suggested for its writing. First the latter part of the Domitian reign about AD 96; the second, the pre-destruction of Jerusalem date in the period of Nero Caesar, about A.D. 58-68. The late date contention for the Domitian date is based mainly on two claims:

That in the second century a "church father" named Irenaeus is said to have seen Polycarp who is also said to have said that John was seen by him in the latter part of the reign of Domitian and that has been taken to mean that the apocalypse was seen or he could have meant the Apostle John was seen at that time. The most that can be said of this contention is that it is rather a circuitous method of arriving at a point of chronology, and it sounds more like hearsay than history.

The quote from the church father Irenaeus (130–202 AD) that is often referenced in debates about the date of Revelation. There are two questions (1) what Irenaeus actually said, and (2) what Eusebius (265-339 AD) thought Irenaeus said. What Irenaeus actually said: ... (the context is the number and name of the Antichrist) "Had there been

any need for his name to be openly announced at the present time, it would have been stated by the one who saw the actual revelation. For it was seen not a long time back, but almost in my own lifetime, at the end of Domitian's reign." (Against Heresies, 5.30.3)

The phrase "it was seen" is translating a single Greek word: ἑωράθη. And this meaning commonly taken to refer back to "the actual revelation"... Thus, Irenaeus would be stating John saw the Revelation at the end of Domitian's reign, the later date (late-90sAD).

But what needs to be noted here is that ἑωράθη is a third-person singular verb, which means the subject can be either he, she, or it. So this particular verb (they translate it) in this particular form can just as easily be translated "he (John) was seen." And plenty of examples can be produced from Greek literature where the word ἑωράθη refers to a person who was seen rather than a thing or object.

Only the context can determine whether ἑωράθη is best translated ...

Irenaeus's point makes better sense if it is translated "he (John) was seen." In that case, Irenaeus would be referring back to John himself and not to the revelation that John saw. A paraphrase might look like this: "If Christians had needed to know the precise name of the Antichrist, John could have easily made it clear, seeing as how he (John) was seen (he was alive) until recently, almost in our own day."

Which of the following statements makes better sense ...

Consider other things Irenaeus says about the book of Revelation ... (He) states that the number 666 is "found in all the most approved and ancient copies" of Revelation (Against Heresies, 5.30.1).

Irenaeus makes reference to "ancient copies" of the book of Revelation. Not only were these copies ancient (i.e. they had been around a very long time), but they were also in fact copies (Not the

original versions). So when Irenaeus, just a couple paragraphs later, speaks of something that “was seen not a long time back (it could not be ancient), but almost in my own lifetime,” how could that be a reference to the vision of Revelation? What kind of sense would it make for Irenaeus to refer to copies of (Revelation) the apocalyptic vision as “ancient,” but also maintain that the vision itself occurred almost in his own lifetime?

This problem is alleviated if we understand ἐωράθη as a reference to John himself (“he was seen”), rather than the apocalyptic vision”

Also the same writer says: “John was so old and feeble he had to be carried to Church and could only speak a few words to the people”.

Some suppose the apostasy in the Asian churches forms a case for the late Domitian date, based on the improbability of apostasies occurring so soon (after the Apostles) as the earlier date ... hence, indicating a longer existence of the Asian churches than the earlier date would allow (after the Church being established), But Paul had not been gone but a few months & the apostasies of the Galatian had begun:

Galatians 1:6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

And of the Hebrew teachers and members, as Hebrews 6:1-6; Hebrews 10:25-39, together seem to refute the impossibility of such an early apostasy of the Asian churches, if not altogether the claim of improbabilities that departures in the churches could have occurred and did occur that soon. The evidences of these early apostasies are also seen in such passages as Romans 16:17, I John 2:15 and such as

I John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they

went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

The argument for the early Neroan date has solid internal proof within the book itself and external historical support by recognized and respectable scholars of high standing.

In the first book of the eight volume set entitled: The History of The Christian Church, by the world recognized historian, Philip Schaff, the author cited a group of twenty reputable scholars who assign the date of Revelation to the early Nero period before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. There are Many who also applied its descriptions to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, the fall of Judaism and the end of the Jewish state all in the fierce conflict with the Roman empire.

Among these high-ranking scholars are the names of Moses Stuart, Samuel Davidson, Ewald, Bleek, DeWitte, and Cowles, who were named by historian Philip Schaff. Other notable names added from other sources who hold to this early Neroan date are, can you believe Westcott and Hort (authors of the New Testament Greek Text), Farrar, Lightfoot, and as Paul said of the honor roll of Hebrews eleven, the time would fail me to tell of them all. But historian Schaff, on page 219, places the beginning of "the Neronian persecution" in A.D. 64, the tenth year of Nero, according to Tacitus; and the martyrdom of Paul and Peter either then or a few years later, and states that some of the best scholars in his estimation, from the internal indications, assign the apocalyptic epistle to the period between A.D. 60 and A.D. 70, before the destruction of Jerusalem.

In addition to the consensus of the views of such an impressive array of scholars as mentioned and commended in Schaff's history, there are the testimonies of other eminent scholars such as Charles Wordsworth, of Cambridge (author of the multiple volume

Commentary On The Bible, and the long out of print volume entitled Lectures On The Apocalypse; and Milton S. Terry, of the Garrett Biblical Institute of the Northwestern University (author of Biblical Apocalypics); and James M. MacDonald, of Princeton (author of The Life and Writings Of John). In the Commentary and the Lectures Wordsworth stoutly opposed the various forms of millennialism and committed himself to the view of the early origin of Revelation.

He argued forcefully against the theory of (A 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth or) the future millennium based on the twentieth chapter of Revelation. He said in substance that the millennialists have all commonly supposed the apocalypse to be a continuous prophetic history, flowing in regular chronological stream from the beginning of the events to the end of time. Based on their assumption of the millennial claims, they believe that the twentieth chapter describes a future period beginning at the return of the Lord. They cannot allow the transpiring of these events earlier than a time posterior to the coming of Christ. This conclusion is based on the erroneous premise of the late date for the apocalypse, disconnecting it from the events of 70 AD anticipated in its visions and imagery. The fundamental error is in the assumption that "the seven seals" extend from the apostolic age to the end of time. But the Book Of Revelation is not that kind of a consecutive prophecy, but rather a succession of immediate events.

It is further argued that the doctrine of the future millennium, based on the late date, caused the apocalypse to decline in repute because, said Wordsworth, "the doctrine of millennialism is repugnant to the Scriptures," and the misinterpretations resulted in the rejection of the entire apocalypse as unauthentic whims. But with these misconceptions refuted the book takes its proper place with the other epistles, dealing with things present and immediate, and respect for the apocalypse was restored. The kingdom of Christ is spiritual and

future wars and revolutions of political import are not the object in Revelation.

The importance of this phase of the study of Revelation justifies the further mention and consideration of History Of The Christian Church, by Philip Schaff, the international scholar, theologian and historian, who was the president of the translating committee for the American Standard Revised Version of 1885-1901, composed of one hundred one of the world's ripest scholars. The statements that follow, gathered from the first volume of his history, summing up the views of a galaxy of scholars, historians, theologians and commentators, weigh heavily in favor of the early Neroan date for the Book Of Revelation.

The testimony of these authorities, as confirmed by Schaff's history,

- (1) Nero Persecution in Rome began about 64 AD. Probably none of the apostles remained to record the horrible massacre the destruction of Jerusalem except John . . . who was himself the victim of the horrors. . . . The seer must have had in view the Neronian persecution, the most cruel that ever occurred, when he called the woman seated on seven hills "drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus," and prophesied her downfall as a matter of rejoicing for the "saints and apostles and prophets". . . . Some commentators discover a direct allusion to Nero, as expressing in the Hebrew numerology the letters Nero Caesar the mysterious number adds up to 666. –**

Beginnings of Christian Martyrdom in Rome 64 AD Paul & Probably Peter were some of the first to be murdered ...

The following account was written by the Roman historian Tacitus in his book Annals published a few years after the event. Tacitus was a young boy living in Rome during the time of the persecutions.

"Therefore, to stop the rumor [that he had set Rome on fire], Emperor Nero falsely charged with guilt, and punished with the most fearful tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius, but the pernicious superstition - repressed for a time, broke out yet again, not only through Judea, - where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow from all quarters, as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged. Accordingly first those were arrested who confessed they were Christians; next on their information, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city, as of "hating the human race. In their very deaths they were made the subjects of sport: for they were covered with the hides of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set fire to, and when the day waned, burned to serve for the evening lights. Nero offered his own garden players for the spectacle, and exhibited a Circensian game, indiscriminately mingling with the common people in the dress of a charioteer, or else standing in his chariot. For this cause a feeling of compassion arose towards the sufferers, though guilty and deserving of exemplary capital punishment, because they seemed not to be cut off for the public good, but were victims of the ferocity of one man."

(2) That the internal evidence of the apocalypse itself, and a comparison with the fourth gospel, favor an earlier date before the destruction of Jerusalem . . . The unmistakable allusions to imperial persecutions apply much better to Nero than to Domitian . . . that

John was exiled on Patmos under Nero, where he wrote the apocalypse not later than A.D. 64 to 68 or, not only before the destruction of Jerusalem, but before the Gospel of John, and at least twenty years before his death at Ephesus.

(3) That the traditional date of the composition of the apocalypse at the end of the Domitian reign in A.D. 95 or 96, rests on a misunderstanding and statement of the testimony of Irenaeus, but the internal evidence strongly favors the earlier date, before the destruction of Jerusalem.

(4) That the apocalypse is a Christian counterblast against the Neronian persecution, with Nero represented as the beast of the abyss, and the number 666 signifying the very name of this imperial monster in the Hebrew letters-- NERON CAESAR--as follows: N-50; R-200; O-6; N-50; K-100; S-60; R-200 the sum of which is 666.

(5) That the Neronian coins of Asia bear the inscription of Nero Caesar, the first and most wicked of all imperial persecutors of Christianity, and who was eminently worthy of being characterized as the beast of the abyss, and who was regarded as the embodiment of Antichrist.

(6) You can understand a Manuscript variant when you understand: That the Hebrew letters for 666 correspond to the Latin and the Greek, with, the last letter N having been dropped by a copyist from the Latin, making the sum 616 (found in few Manuscripts).

(7) That the apocalypse of Revelation is based on the Lord's discourse in Matthew 24, describing the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. It is therefore not to be supposed that the language, or style of thought, or type of doctrine must needs resemble those of other production of the same author . . . The difference of language is further accounted for by the supposition that the apocalypse was written by the apostle

at an early period of his ministry, and the gospel and epistles some twenty or thirty years later.

All of the early writers excepting the statement of Irenaeus, favor the early rather than later date. The facts appealed to indicate the times before rather than after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Textual redaction considerations:

The “Syriac version” of the New Testament, which dates back to the second century A.D., states that Revelation was written during the reign of Nero making a date of 64-68 A.D.

The “Muratorian Fragment,” dating back to 170-190 A.D., states that this work of John was written during the reign of Nero.

The “Aramaic Peshitta” version has a remark that places its date prior to 70 A.D. The title page of Revelation states this work of John was written right after the reign of Nero.

The “Monarchian Prologues,” that dates back to 250-350 A.D., claims that Paul also wrote to these seven churches (possibly Romans which was a “circular letter,” thus, placing the book even before some of the other Pauline epistles.

A quote, arguably attributed to Papius (130 AD), states that John the Apostle was martyred before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Roman law of exile:

Nero Caesar exiled John on the island of Patmos. Nero died in 68 AD, and according to Roman law, those banned by a prior Caesar would be released by the succeeding Caesar. Thus, John would have been released from Patmos around 68 AD. John himself mentions he was at Patmos when he received the Revelation.

The condition of the Church in Asia Minor:

John is clearly writing to the seven churches and consequently to people being persecuted by Rome. Rome was a bloodthirsty, pagan empire that oppressed its people, especially Christians, who were considered criminals and slaves and used for sadistic entertainment.

Peter also wrote to the Christians in Asia Minor around the same time for an early date or a few years before John (1Pet. 1:1-6; 4:12; 5:9). He notes that they were in extreme persecution, suffering, and in dire anguish. This is similar to John's language and situation (Re 2:9; 3:9) and similar situations recorded by Paul in Acts 13:50; 14:5,19; 17:5-8,13; 18:12. Thus, the severity of the persecution is consistent with an early date.

Four Views of how to Interpret the Book of Revelation

1. Pre-ter-ist. Most prophecies in the book of Revelation were fulfilled during the time of the Roman empire and the belief that the prophecies of the book are divinely inspired and were fulfilled mostly in the first centuries after Christ.

Most with this viewpoint are theologically conservative and believe in an early date of the book before 70AD. Those of us who advocate this view point out the correspondence between Revelation and the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD. Preterist point to Revelation 1:1 & 19, which says that the predicted events must "shortly come to pass." Also Jesus' Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:1-35 was primarily fulfilled with the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in 70AD.

Most conservative preterists allow, however, that the last chapters of Revelation describe the Second Coming of Christ.

As you will see during the study, I personally slightly differ in that I understand the second coming being referred to several times in the

book with a snapback to tell the story of the destruction of Jerusalem again from other perspectives.

2. The Historicist View. The prophecies have been fulfilled throughout history and are still being fulfilled today.

While this interpretation is not widely in use today, those who have been steeped in popular futurist views are often surprised to learn that most of the classic commentaries from a century or more ago are written from a historicist viewpoint. Many of the great leaders of the Reformation and later also held to this view: Wycliffe, Knox, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Melanchthon, Newton, Huss, Foxe, Wesley, Edwards, Whitfield and Finney.

According to historicists, Revelation is a kind of survey of church history, with historical events symbolically portrayed. Historicists believe that exact time periods are specified, assuming that each day specified in the text equals a year in real time.

Another prominent feature of Protestant historicism is its belief that the Antichrist of Revelation refers to the Roman Pope. For this reason, some die-hard historicists assert that all other interpretations of Revelation are Satanically inspired attempts to obscure the Antichrist's true identity ... but let's remember there are many antichrists. Cf:

I John 2:18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the^o Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

3. The Futurist View believes most prophecies beyond Revelation 3 are yet to be fulfilled.

This is the view held by most modern contemporary North American evangelical writers and teachers. Somewhat ironically, futurism was originated in 1585 by Francisco Ribeira, a Spanish Jesuit priest, for

the purpose of refuting the historicist views of the Protestant reformers and to defend the office of the Pope.

The most popular version of futurism today is dispensationalism, which has only been around since the “great disappointment” of the 1830’s, when J.N. Darby began teaching his ideas of a secret Rapture of the church they see in Revelation 4:1 would take place in 1844 followed by a tribulation period, and a 1,000-year rule of Christ.

Futurists tend to take a “literal view” of the book of Revelation.

Since futurists believe that few, if any, of the events from chapters 4-22 of Revelation have taken place, it is easy for them to assert that most of these prophecies are to be taken literally ... whereas preterists, historicists and spiritualists must wrestle with symbolic interpretations of passages about the two witnesses and the four horsemen, for example).

This literal interpretation of the highly symbolic book of Revelation ignores the style of writing God inspired John to use. The first key in understanding literature of any type is to determine the kind (genre) of literature it is.

Revelation is prophecy, letter and apocalyptic — with the apocalyptic style predominating. Apocalyptic style was well known at the time John wrote, using cryptic meanings and symbolic images. Above all, apocalyptic literature is born of immediate persecution and oppression and anticipates the final triumph of good over evil.

Disregarding the language God inspires to convey His message “shortly”, futurists conveniently avoid having their “this is going to happen in the near future” approach tested by historical events.

Dispensationalists, in particular, can prognosticate freely with the confidence that they will be raptured before the bulk of Revelation is fulfilled and will not be around on earth to be embarrassed by any

inaccuracies in their predictions ... since they believe they will be raptured in

Revelation 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”

On further thought, this approach if true renders the book irrelevant and of little practical use for most Christians, as they either will have died or will have been raptured before its fulfillment.

4. Spiritual (or Symbolic or Idealist). Most prophecies portray the ongoing cosmic conflict of spiritual realities and may have many fulfillments throughout history.

This actually represents a variety of approaches that look for lessons or principles — often recurrent in history — symbolically depicted in Revelation. Noting the apocalyptic style in which the book is written, this interpretation sees the central theme as the triumph of good over evil, of Christ over Satan. Passages that other approaches regard as depicting chronological events such as the seals, trumpets and emergence of the beast are regarded allegorically by spiritualists as recurring realities in history as part of God’s sovereign plan for humankind.

The obvious advantage of this view is that there is no need to match events described in the book to real events. The disadvantage is that the book of Revelation itself claims to predict certain specific events

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must ^[a]shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John,

Although scholars and teachers may label themselves with one of these distinct methods for interpreting the book of Revelation, in practice, they often use various combinations of the four views.

Revelation is a complex book. Because it is part of Holy Scripture, we can trust that it has value for all Christians. Those who seek to understand it would do well to learn from a variety of sources and to familiarize themselves with the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches.

It is disturbing to hear some judgmental fire-breathers claim that theirs is the only approach, or worse yet, to label others as non-Christian merely because they interpret the book of Revelation differently. We should remember the Church at Thessalonica did not fully understand the second coming of Christ in I Thessalonians and Paul had to write them again yet he treated them as saved “brethren” in II Thessalonians ... we should preach & teach the truth as we understand it to the best of our ability and not judge the salvation of men’s souls ... Christ will decide the salvation of men’s souls.

In Defense of the Apostle John’s Authorship

Revelation has terrible Greek in fact the worst in the New Testament while John’s other writings are the very best cultured Greek in the New Testament. The Gospel of John & I, II & III John were probably written from Ephesus where John had use of scribes or a secretary called an amanuensis not available in prison on Patmos.

John is described as unlearned and ignorant men without a Twiddle DD and may have been incapable of writing cultured Greek

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

When John speaks of himself he says: “I John or John” would have been so well known as the Apostle John to refer to himself in such a way and ha Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they

marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.ve the Churches accept it as being authentic.

Certain words, teachings, doctrines, and expressions are used by John in his epistles which are found in Revelations.

These John words are so similar they give proof to the Apostolic authorship: The “Logos” translated “word” in our Bibles

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

I John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—

Revelation 19:13 He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

Similarly, “the Lamb” is found as Christ’s Title

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

John 1:36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

Revelation 5:6 And I looked, ^[c]and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

And Jesus is referred to as the Lamb some 27 times in Revelation.

Both John & Revelation both contain the promise

John 7:37-39 On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” 39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Revelation 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

Greg also said: “Other typically Johannine expressions in Revelations include the unique “keep” from Greek *ter-eo ek* John 17:15 cf: Rev. 3:10 and a particular form of the Greek word “true” (*alethinous*) which appears nine times in John, four times in I John and ten times in Revelation, but only 5 times in the rest of the New Testament. Similarly, the concept of the “first resurrection is found in:

John 5:24-29 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. ²⁵ Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, ²⁷ and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. ³⁰ I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

Revelation 20:5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

Satan being “cast out”

John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

Revelation 12:9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Revelation 12:13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*.

and the idea of “overcoming” the world or Satan are found exclusively in John’s writings:

John 16:22 Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

I John 2:13-14 I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father.

¹⁴ I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.

I John 5:4-5 ⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world our faith. ⁵ Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Revelation 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

Revelation 21:7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

Strangely John and Revelation both make paraphrastic use of Zechariah 12:10, through neither properly quote it exactly John 19:37 cf: Rev. 1:7.

As F.F. Bruce says: Revelations comes from the same environment as the other Johannine writings. Whatever differences there are between this book and the fourth Gospel both present the one who is called the “Word of God” and the “Lamb of God” saying to His followers, “In this world ye have troubles. But take heart John 16:33. Whatever differences there are between it and the first letter of John both encourage the people of Christ with the assurance: “This is the victory that that has overcome the world our faith” I John 5:4.

Symbolism:

Many people say, “the word of God says it and I believe it ... or the Bible says what it means, I take it literally.”

Revelation speaks in symbolism, an example is:

Revelation 5:6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

No matter how you interpret Revelation no sane person believes Jesus is a lamb, with fleece & cloven hooves, with 7 horns and 7 eyes. Everyone understands that is figurative and a symbol ... so those who say they take the Bible in every case literally are they do not tell the truth, and are speaking with forked tongues.

Revelations speaks of people, Spirits, Nations as animals ... no one believes the World will be ruled by a literally “beast ... having 7 heads and 10 horns” it is a symbol. The Devil is called

Revelation also speaks of two women one a bride and the other a harlot and equates the bride with the new Jerusalem cf:

Revelation 21:1-2 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, ^[a]John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Hebrews 12:22-23 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the ^[i]general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Ephesians 5:25-27 - Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 that He might ^[g]sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Revelation 21:9 - And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

2 Corinthians 11:2 - For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present [you as] a

chaste virgin to Christ.

She is also referred to as the lamb's bride which is the church.

Speaking again in symbols "mystery Babylon the Great" is said to be riding upon a beast. And the angel said let me explain that:

That woman is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.

Persons are given symbolic names such as:

Jezebel is referred to because she brought sins upon the church that the Old Testament Jezebel taught Israel.

Jesus is like David.

John the Baptist is symbolically like Elijah

Revelation 11:8 And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also **our Lord** was crucified.

Jerusalem is called Sodom and Egypt which are symbolic images because they began to act worse than Sodom and Egypt.

Cosmic and geological disruptions are pictured as stars falling to earth which really means political upheavals such as when Babylon fell to the Meds and Persians, as Isaiah says,

Isaiah 13:10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations **Will not give their light;**
The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine.

Revelation 6:13-14 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. ¹⁴ Then the sky **receded** as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

Heavens are rolled up like a scroll and when it happens you would think it's the end of the world but it's the beginning a star with a key to the bottomless pit.

Proverbs 30:27 The locusts have no king, Yet they all advance in ranks;

Locusts have no King over them.

Seven is often used to write scripture to mean completeness

The righteous man falls seven times but the Lord upholds him.

Seven times in the night I will arise and praise you.

Seven is used to describe animal horns which is used to describe power.

Seven is woven throughout the book as symbolic such as

The letter is addressed to seven churches in Asia when we know there were more churches such as Troas so seven must be symbolic of the total church.

Revelation speaks of the seven spirits of God, seven angels, seven seals on a scroll that are broken, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven wraths or bowls of wrath. There are seven beatitudes in the book. So, seven generally means perfect.

When Revelations speaks of a third it is symbolic for a large minority. One third is the largest whole fraction less than one half. As an example, Ezekiel was told to shave his hair, chop up one third, burn one third and throw one third to the wind. These are symbolic that Babylon will chop up and kill about a third of the people, they will then burn or put to death another third and a third will be scattered which may include the captives. Generally speaking, one half just means a significant portion and is not literal.

When you see the 24 elders which is twice times 12, it is symbolic probably for Israel and the church. Israel had twelve tribes the sons of Jacob and the church had twelve apostles.

144,000 is $12 \times 12,000 = 144,000$ which is symbolic for all the saved church. The new city of Jerusalem has twelve foundations and twelve gates.

1,000 is called a millennium and is only mentioned in Revelation 20 in the whole Bible. Why would it be literal when everything in that chapter in most of Revelation is symbolic or figurative?

God own the cattle on a thousand hills.

Deuteronomy 7:9 God keeps the covenant to a thousand generations.

Psalms 90:4 For a thousand years in Your sight *Are* like yesterday when it is past, And *like* a watch in the night.

PSALMS 50:10 For every beast of the forest *is* Mine, *And* the cattle on a thousand hills.

No other book in the Bible uses 1,000 literally.

Other symbolic figures of speech are the church at Sumatra is said to have tribulation ten days.

Revelation says that king give the beast power for one hour which simply means a short time.

The idealist view of Revelation is that it has seven parallel sections like a Greek play which has seven acts and seven scenes. Seven cannot be divided reasonably. You could follow these and say they are reasonably correct.

In chapters one through three we see the letters to the seven churches.

In chapters 4-7 we see the seven seals.

In chapter 8-11 we see the seven trumpets.

In chapters 12, 13 & 14 they say that there are seven great signs and in my opinion that's where it begins to fall apart because I am having a hard time finding them.

In the idealist view seven equals the whole church age. They believe the seven churches are representative of churches throughout history who are just like that. They believe the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of wrath are the same which makes some sense because:

First = the earth

Second = the sea

Third = rivers

Fourth = the heavenly bodies the sun the moon the stars

Fifth = Euphrates river

Sixth = ?

Seventh is the end of the world.

There are some parallels there where the trumpets mention one third it is a partial judgement while the bowls of wrath are a final judgement.

We see the birth of Jesus in chapter 12

The beginning of the church age in chapter 20.

While the coming of Jesus is described in 11 & 19 in parallel.

Symbols are reworking Old Testament symbols it is like reweaving a tapestry when you look at it from the back our point of view we have confusion but when you turn the rug over we see the heavenly symbolism make sense.

Revelation is a book of symbols and illustrations of Old Testament material.

Isaiah is eluded to 79 times. Daniel is alluded to 53 times. Ezekiel 48 times. Psalms 43 times. Exodus 27 times. Jerimiah 22 times. Zechariah 15 times. Amos 9 times. Joel 8 times... but yet not one scripture of the Old Testament is actually quoted. The symbology is simply borrowed and reused in a different way.

As an example the two witnesses in Chapter 11 is borrowed from Zechariah chapter 4 where there are two anointed ones called olive trees. Most learned men understand this to refer to Zerubbabel and Zechariah representative of the government ant the priesthood. But in Revelation the two witnesses are borrowed from the life of Christ, who preached three and a half years; were persecuted and put to death, lay dead for three days and got up and went to Heaven. They work miracles that are a rebirth of images and symbols innovatively used by John in a new way working the miracles of Elijah and Moses... So some say that this is like the transfiguration where Moses the representative of the Law and Elijah the representative of the Prophets come back to earth as the two witnesses and work miracles ... forgetting that in the Gospels a cloud covers Moses and Elijah and God tells the apostles "This is my beloved son hear ye Him."

Some hypothesize that the two witnesses could be Elijah and Enoch because, what they have in common is, they never died;

Hebrews 9:27 and as it is appointed unto men once to die ...

Which kind of makes sense until you think about it, there will be a whole generation of Christians who will never taste death, who are alive at the Second Coming of Christ, and will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, I Thessalonians 4:13ff, and be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, cf: I Corinthians 15:50ff

So, again in Revelations the rebirth of images and symbols that the author has innovated and used in new ways from the Old Testament to allow you to see the visions in his mind.

Revelation 11:8 And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also **our** Lord was crucified.

Jerusalem has become the new Egypt and, the new dragon

Revelation 12:3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

the dragon persecutes the woman showing to be the new Egypt

Ezekiel 29:3 and Psalm 74:13

The woman is like Israel in Joseph's dream, which has become the Church, chases the woman into the wilderness, as Pharaoh chased Israel; but God sustained the new Israel, the Church in the wilderness by the earth opening up her mouth and swallowing the flood as Korah who rebelled against Moses, went down alive into the pit (the earth)

Just as Israel was delivered by great plagues, darkness, hail, boils, frogs, and water turned into blood ... we must caution you about taking this as being literal, when it is intended to recall the plagues of Moses. Just as Israel sang the new song of Moses in Exodus 15, the Church in Heaven sings the song of Moses and the Lamb, cf:

Revelation 15:3-4

Because the deliverance parallels the deliverance from Egypt.

God give instructions for the tabernacle, but, in Revelations we see it in heaven and not on earth, remember, God told Moses

Remember to build it as the pattern shown thee on the mount.

Twice God delivered Israel, once from Egypt and once from Babylon; and these become types of His Deliverance of us.

Babylon is pictured as being drunk with the blood of the martyrs and the saints. The Euphrates is pictured as being dried up to make way for the kings of the east, which is simply symbolic of how Media Persia conquered the great walled city of Babylon by diverting the Euphrates River, and marching their army down the dry riverbed, under the wall, while the Babylonians were throwing a drunken party.

Sources: KJV Bible, theWord.com, Burton Coffman, Adam Clarke, Foy Wallace Commentary, Steve Gregg @ the Narrow Path Commentaries, 5/22/20. The Iron Clad Network, Avenging His Holy Saints, Apostles and Prophets by D. Gene West.